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SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP

E.O 12358: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: AUGUST AIR BRIDGE DENIAL UPDATE: ABD COMPLETES
FIRST YEAR OF OPERATIONS

REF: A. 2003 STATE 265910

1. (U) Summary: This is the August 2004 Air Bridge Denial (ABD) activity report required by ref A. This message also includes an overview of the program's achievements in its first year. During August, there were two Phase III events and two Phase I events, including one arrested pilot. There were 3583 tracks, of which 32 were declared Unidentified, Assumed Suspect (UAS). Areas of concern include P-3 surveillance aircraft availability and decreased Relocatable Over-the Horizon Radar (ROTHR) tracks. End Summary.

ABD Tracks

2. (U) In August, 2004, 3583 tracks were identified over Colombia, of which 32 were declared Unidentified, Assumed Suspect (UAS) aircraft. The GOC did not react to 19 UAS: seven were too close to international waters; five were near international borders; three were subsequently identified as friendly; information on two was too old or insufficient; and two were in areas covered with weather. The GOC reacted to 13 UAS, nine of which were not located by the trackers. Phase I was conducted on two: one was identified as friendly and one resulted in the pilot's arrest. Phase III events were conducted on August 8 and 24.

Law Enforcement End Game

3. (SBU) On August 31, 2004, the Carepa Radar (Northern Colombia) picked up a track westbound towards the Pacific coast. A Citation tracker was scrambled to locate it and the UAS was detected 90 minutes after it disappeared from radar. A UH-60 gunship was scrambled and joined up on the Citation and the UAS. The UAS responded to Phase I calls and proceeded to land at Santa Fe de Antioquia, where the Gunship also landed and waited until Colombian National Police arrived, impounded the aircraft, and arrested the pilot.

Phase III Events

4. (SBU) On August 8, 2004, ROTHR picked up a track inbound to Colombia in the Dog's Head area (southeastern Colombia.) A Citation and an AC-47 were scrambled from Apiay air base in Meta Department. A second Citation was eventually launched to relieve the first one. The AC-47 sighted the UAS on the ground, concealed in vegetation with engines showing as two hot spots. Phase I was completed and Phase II was requested and completed with no response. Phase III was then completed by the AC-47 with no indication of the aircraft being disabled. The AC-47 then returned to base to refuel, an OV-10 conducted Phase III with no visible results and returned to base. The AC-47 refueled, returned, and completed Phase III with an apparent hit, as smoke was observed and the aircraft was presumed destroyed. A Citation was overhead during these actions.

5. (SBU) August 24, 2004. Based on GOC Intelligence, a Citation sighted a helicopter parked in an illegal field in Northern Antioquia Department and concealed with a tarp. A Bell 212 helicopter gunship was launched. No ground forces were launched due to security situation in the area. Phases I and II were conducted without receiving any response or seeing movement in the area and the Bell 212 proceeded with Phase III and destroyed the target.

August Activity

6. (SBU) There was limited P-3 surveillance aircraft activity over Colombia during August and for the months of June, July, and August there was a 25 percent decrease in ROTHR tracks, probably due to atmospheric conditions. The three Citations flew a total of 187 Hours in August. Fifty percent of the August sorties were in response to GOC intelligence, 20 percent in response to ROTHR tracks, and 13 percent for P-3 support.

First Year of ABD operations

17. (SBU) From the beginning of the program to the end of August, there have been seven Phase I events, five Phase II events, and 17 Phase III events. Eighteen aircraft have been destroyed, two pilots have been arrested and one died when the aircraft crashed trying to land. Five other crewmembers were arrested. This compares favorably to the average of 16 aircraft destroyed per year during the six years of the previous air interdiction program. Under the previous program, any FAC aircraft anywhere in Colombian Airspace could perform an intercept. Under the current ABD program, more stringent procedures are in effect, including the requirement that an ABD tracker be present to initiate an ABD event. In effect, three aircraft are interdicting aerial drug trafficking over an area the combined size of Texas and California. By the end of CY 2004, we expect the number of ABD trackers to double, with a seventh tracker expected to arrive early 2005.

18. (U) An Interim Program Review (IPR) was held August 24 in Bogota. The next ABD IPR will be September 22, also in Bogota.
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